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Abstract

Focusing on the London 2012 Olympic Games, we investigate the impact of mega-sport events' spatial transformations on visitor mobility, local leisure consumption and resulting small business trade. Olympic territorialisation, we argue, is a highly contentious and vitally important aspect of leisure studies warranting on-going and further examination. Our case study draws on 43 in-depth interviews with local authorities, governmental and non-governmental project actors, and small-local leisure and visitor economy businesses (retail and hospitality) located at the heart of a 'Host Event Zone' in Greenwich, London. We supplement and triangulate subjective accounts with a documentary analysis of 35 policy reports, media, and archival material as the basis for our empirical analysis. Our findings reveal a major dichotomy between the 'rhetoric' of inclusion and local 'realities' of exclusion as security planning and spatial controls served to close off public spaces and local attractions: diverting visitor flows and leisure consumption toward official event sites, away from local businesses. We illustrate how such urban processes effectively render a vibrant business community invisible and visitors immobile to explore local community spaces during the live staging periods. We close with implications for event organisers, managers and policy makers focused on re-configuring the socio-spatial elements of Olympic organisation and re-direct and mobilise visitor economy flows toward more open civic and leisure spaces in the hope of better (re)distributing consumption into host communities.

Key words: Tourist mobility; Visitor economy; Business leveraging; Event impacts; Host community; London 2012 Olympic Games.

Introduction

Securing local community support plays a vital role in the legitimisation of mega-sport events (MSEs) (Foley et al., 2011). Project actors, from National Organising Committees (NOC) of prospective candidate host cities through to national and federal governments, finely craft irresistible narratives to justify the use, and related expenditure of a MSE as a catalyst for urban development. Rhetorical benefits are projected onto incumbent hosting communities, and local small businesses are promised an opportunity to reap the direct, indirect and induced economic opportunities on offer, specifically major tourism and local economic gains for the host community (Weed, 2008). Yet, although benefits for the host community often form a core justification in initial Olympic bidding and planning phases, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that local, particularly smaller businesses can be excluded from both key decision-making processes and the projected opportunities that served to legitimise the event in the first place (Duignan et al, 2018). Both Flyvbjerg et al (2003) and Raco and Tunney (2010) argue that small businesses emerge as a bureaucratic fait accompli to be overcome as quickly, quietly and efficiently as possible – rarely influencing objectives and actions of large-scale projects like MSEs. Vlachos (2016) emphasises that official narratives rarely focus on benefits for local businesses and urban communities in favour of broader impacts at regional, national and international level. As a result, their narratives remain relatively hidden and somewhat invisible (Armstrong et al, 2017). Indeed, a growing body of evidence has started to detail the multiple ways they can find themselves marginalised from official Games activities occurring on their doorstep (Giulianotti et al, 2015). Raco and Tunney (2010) argue that this condition represents 'the visibilities' vs. 'the invisibilities' of suburban communities situated at the margins of flagship urban development projects. Simultaneously, enabling and disabling access to certain urban-event spaces over others represents what

Giulianotti et al (2015) refer to as the ‘mobile politics of exclusion’. Mobility (or perhaps the relative immobility) of mega-event visitors, and the opportunity to effectively engage and consume within local areas, represent dominant themes of this article. Our analysis contributes to explaining why these vulnerable communities frequently find themselves less-visible and relatively easy targets for exclusion during the appropriation of soon-to-be Olympic spaces.

Despite a growing body of evidence around such challenges, literature around the marginalisation of small business remains in its infancy. Where research does exist (e.g. Vlachos, 2016; Giulianotti et al (2015), Raco and Tunney, 2010, Clark et al (2016), Armstrong et al (2017)) the negative fallout for locals is clear. Yet, the examination of small business impact is often written in as a sub-theme as opposed to driving the research investigation in the first place. In this paper we explicitly position small businesses at the heart of the study and provide an in-depth examination of the socio-spatial exclusions at the Host Event Zone (HEZ) level. This provides a unique opportunity to draw on local lived experiences of the event to simultaneously: i) empirically enhance our understanding of the key concepts under investigation, and ii) amplify narratives at the firm and local community level. Our empirical focus is placed on firms operating within the retail and food and beverage (F&B) sector, that are located within Central Greenwich’s close-knit town centre south of the River Thames in London, immediately before and during the live staging of London 2012.

As well as examining the broader organisational processes and conditions, we provide a unique insight in to the complex, contextual, and idiosyncratic ‘live staging’ impacts of an MSE in the heart of a host community – a key geographical, temporal and stakeholder perspective missing from existing literature. This is particularly critical in light of Vlachos’s (2016) concern that business narratives continue to be dominated by ‘big business’ demands at the macro-level, from large-scale suppliers of products and services to the Games, right through to official, corporate sponsors. Hall (2006) claims that broader MSE interests, including external, contingent corporate sponsors’ interests, often block out small businesses from accessing a whole host of benefits. Pertinently for this research, this includes opportunities related to the visitor economy. Here, Giulianotti et al (2015) suggests that MSEs (further) require – and provide – an ideal case study backdrop to evaluate the exclusionary outcomes inherent in the complex socio-spatial processes occurring within Olympic planning. Such analysis also emerges as vital in light of Cashman’s (2006: 15) criticism that event organisers tend to overly focus on ‘planned, positive, and tangible’ effects despite major concerns that MSEs frequently exhibit significant negative challenges.

Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do MSEs serve to re-engineer host community (public) spaces?
2. What are the implications of MSEs’ spatial organisation on visitor mobility: behaviour, flows and local leisure consumption across host spaces?
3. What challenges and opportunities for local small leisure businesses can be identified as a consequence?

Literature review

Territorialising and securing urban space

MSEs have a history of strategically targeting a series of urban districts across the host city to house Olympic activity (Smith, 2013), specifically the development of official HEZs. Within these sites, official venue(s), sports, cultural and commercial activity temporarily replaces existing socioeconomic activity. They are

created out of institutional necessity to satisfy operational requirements and secure return on investments for sponsors (McGuigan, 2005). Cornelissen (2011) argues that MSEs invoke an extraordinary, undemocratic fast-tracked form of governance; a day-to-day escape from the bureaucratic consultative community engagement we have come to expect from democratic nations. Host cities enact powerful forms of regulatory and spatial control by inscribing core planning elements of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) 'Host City Contract' (HCC) into national law. This provides those responsible for Games planning and delivery with the power to enact what Marrero-Guillamón (2013) refers to as an 'Olympic state of exception'. In London for instance, the Olympic project secured a budget of £553m for security, mobilising 'the UK's biggest security operation since 1945 which included tens of thousands of police officers, private security and arms forces personnel' (Giulianotti et al, 2015: 134). Armstrong et al (2017) argues that the stated rationale of a securitised state of exception is first of all to protect the host from a series of internal (i.e. protests) and external threats (i.e. terrorism). Indeed, security and the politics-of-security play a major role in creating the ideal 'official' event spaces to stage what is perceived as a successful Games (Armstrong et al, 2017).

Event organisers are granted extra-ordinary power to efficiently and effectively sequester, territorialise and lock-down the host city and HEZs in whatever way is required to ensure the safe passage of visitors across, to *and* from official event venues. In doing so, event organisers produce what Dansero et al (2015) refer to as 'project territory', a space that is physically and symbolically transformed in contrast with the existing locality and everyday practices of the 'context territory'. Thus, Olympic-forms of territorialisation can be conceptualised as the production of new-temporary 'striated' urban space (McGillivray and Frew, 2015) helping to strategically manoeuvre flows and circulations across the city. Giulianotti et al (2015) refers to this as 'instrumental mobility'. The 'successful' installation of project territory often requires the temporary reengineering of public civic spaces (Smith, 2014). Examples of such include: the construction of corporate 'fan zones' and 'fan parks' (McGillivray and Frew, 2015), and the closure of popular attractions, parks and green spaces (Smith, 2013). Indeed, for small hospitality businesses dependent on leisure spaces being open, this can have devastating consequences (Trading Standards, 2018).

In recent years, HEZs have often housed an elongated transit space called the 'Last Mile'. The Last Mile is 'the term given to the last part of a spectator's journey from a transport hub to Games' venue' (Commission for Sustainable London, 2012: 41), a space usually subject to intense Olympic regulation. Across newly territorialised event spaces, Cornelissen (2011) argues that the host city becomes commodified and a playground for corporate restructuring. MSEs have thus been described as 'cathedrals of consumption' (Roche, 2000) and, more recently, 'brandsapes' (Osborn and Smith, 2016). Public space close to event sites is reengineered into specific zones aimed at animating official commercial and supporter products. Duignan and McGillivray (2016), in the context of the Rio 2016 Olympics, noted the strategic extension of Olympic activity in the form of the 'Olympic Boulevard': the largest ever 'Live Site' in Olympic history. This example is useful to illustrate the power of MSEs to demarcate and redefine urban public space as a form of exclusive commercialised enclave. Indeed, transitory routes of the Last Mile serve as an efficient, optimal way of diverting spectator gaze toward official Olympic supporting organisations and corporate sponsors (McGillivray and Frew, 2015). Pertinently, Armstrong et al (2017) note how the Last Mile is a highly impacted space that intends to marginalise less desirable social groups.

Mega sport events and small business impacts

Tourism and leisure consumption opportunities for local businesses can be broadly split up into two temporal phases: short and long term. This paper focuses on the 'immediate', short-term leverageable impacts associated with tourism and leisure consumption. With respect to short-term impacts MSEs are

widely thought to intensify local leisure consumption, and to provide direct trade opportunities for local retail, cultural, leisure, and hospitality industries (Hiller, 2006). Previous research, however, found that many small businesses lack the resources and skills to leverage such opportunities effectively (Chalip and Leyns, 2002). Wood et al. (2018), for example, found that a community of restaurants in Ontario, Canada, failed to leverage a series of medium-sized sport events due to three main barriers: lack of belief that they could benefit; inconvenient proximity to the event; and inability to plan effectively. To address these problems, leveraging initiatives should be targeted (Kirby et al, 2018; Duignan et al, 2018), planned well in advance of the event (Smith, 2014), and funded and managed at government level (VanWynsberghe, 2016). VanWynsberghe (2016) further stresses the importance of early stakeholder consultation and education about potential opportunities, with a view to align event leveraging with the local context and strategic objectives.

Armstrong et al (2017) show that there was no shortage of local-entrepreneurial initiatives to leverage such potential visitor economy-led opportunity in the context of London 2012. Here, MSEs can be considered illustrative of what Miles (2010) refers to as important means of ‘touristic consumerism’ - offering spectators numerous opportunities to consume various products throughout the event visitor experience. Yet the projected bounties for the local visitor economy often fail to materialise. The literature cites two major reasons for potential challenges: ‘tourism displacement’ (Fourie and Gallego, 2011), and the formation of ‘aversion markets’ (Spilling, 1996). The first, displacement, indicates how ‘normal-to-be-expected’ tourist activity becomes replaced by a type of ‘Olympic-focused’ tourism (Vlachos, 2016). Armstrong et al (2017) described that in the summer of 2012, in London it was ‘hard to discern that a global sporting event was taking place, the boroughs [specific urban districts] were much quieter than usual appearing oddly like an “Olympic void”’ (2017: 142). Similarly, the ETOA (2005, 2010) reports that during the Olympics a destination generally effectively closes for normal business. Chalip and Leyns (2002) and Spilling (1996) both note how economic distribution of benefits are often determined by small business proximity to official event zones.

Critics also argue that predicted tourism benefits are frequently ‘inflated’ (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011) and that simply, little qualitative evidence illustrating positive visitor numbers and consumption benefits exists (Vlachos, 2016). Yet, despite the criticism of over-inflated benefits, and disappointing evidence, tourism is often used as a primary justification for staging MSEs (Smith and Stevenson, 2009). The idea that the Olympic Games pose an opportunity as well as a challenge for local leisure consumption emerges as a dominant theme explored throughout this paper. Indeed, what we can see is a shortage of evidence and research into such complex, often contextually contingent consumption implications. Where understanding does exist, findings are inconsistent between stakeholder groups (e.g. policy makers, local stakeholders, tourism organisations) with conflicted, ambiguous local impact reports lacking in empirical detail, particularly with respect to qualitative analysis of host community experiences.

Methodology

This study takes an exploratory, inductive approach – vital for amplifying local narratives, explicitly contrasting the dominant positivist and quantitative approach often taken in impact analysis (MacRury and Poynter, 2009). Qualitative data is generated through in-depth grounded insights from a single detailed case study to facilitate the emergence and interrogation of a specific host community experience during the planning and delivery of London 2012. Our ‘event case study’ presented (Yin, 2013) reflects a ‘single’ narrow frame (one geographical region) and ‘embedded’ (multiple stakeholder) analysis (Wilson, 2014). As a result, the paper draws predominantly on small business experiences but is also triangulated against other key perspectives such as those of policy makers and business support organisations. This empirically-led

approach allows emergent theories and explanations to be applied to make sense of social, spatial and visitor mobility dynamics identified in the data.

Geographical focus: Central Greenwich town centre and the Last Mile

Our geographical focus examines the well-established touristic and leisure spaces of Central Greenwich, East London – a world-renowned UNESCO World Heritage site (UNESCO, 2018). The Royal Borough of Greenwich was one of six designated ‘Olympic Boroughs’ to host an official HEZ and equestrian area. A range of major heritage and leisure sites are located in Central Greenwich, including Cutty Sark, National Maritime Museum, Royal Observatory, and the Royal Greenwich Park itself: a public park situated metres away from a vibrant high street of local leisure and visitor economy related businesses.

Greenwich’s densely populated business demographic predominantly includes small commercial retail and hospitality outlets. Due to the close-knit relationship between Royal Greenwich Park, the town centre, and incumbent retail and hospitality traders, Central Greenwich was chosen as the empirical focus for this study. In total, the authors observe approximately 60 – 70 small retail and F&B businesses residing across Greenwich’s town centre immediately to the west of Royal Greenwich Park as outlined by the pink square in Figure 1 map below (VisitGreenwich, 2018). Small businesses at the heart of this study are highly reliant on the economic benefits borne by this vibrant visitor economy. As a result, our analysis reveals that small businesses expected to leverage both existing leisure tourists and new transient event crowds for 2012.

[Insert Figure 1 – Greenwich Town Centre map and case study focus (VisitGreenwich, 2018)].

Primary and secondary data collection

Following full ethical clearance granted by [name of institution removed for peer review] in July, 2013, primary data collection commenced between 2013 – 2015, encompassing two separate stages. First, between August – September 2013 (exactly a year after the event) a pilot study was conducted with 6 local gatekeepers to help the researcher to explore initial themes and strengthen local networks. This was followed by the main stage of interviewing, including 43 in-depth interviews across four key stakeholder groups (SGs): i) first hand experiences from retail and food and beverage (F&B) small firm owners placed directly on the ‘Last Mile’ (SG1), ii) official Olympic Borough local authorities and business engagement officers (SG2), iii) regional and national business support organisations (SG3), and iv) key project actors, governmental and non-governmental bodies at city and national level (SG4). A nonprobability, purposive sampling technique was chosen targeting specific key gatekeepers for stage 1 which subsequently led to a snowballing approach that supported data collection across stage 2 (Yin, 2013). Building trust within close-knit networks plays a central role in accessing and interrogating host community perspectives, as is carefully selecting gatekeepers who act as both key informants and a bridge to connect to other local voices (Cade et al, 2019). Indeed, clarifying at the initial stage the objectives and scope of the study, alongside reasons for local involvement, is a central part of the ethics process - something we sought to do in the dissemination and transparency of our participant information documentation and consent forms.

To strengthen the analysis, a triangulation of secondary data sources was used. Sources were chosen based on their direct relevance for revealing either: a) rhetoric and promises to be bestowed, and/or b) illustrating the impact of the Games on either the phenomenon or host community stakeholders under investigation. The types of additional sources used include:

1. Policy document analysis of 35 major London 2012 policy documents released between 2005 and 2013 (e.g. official London 2012 policy documentation);

2. Media reports between 2010 and 2013 (e.g. BBC, The Guardian, and Financial times).

[Insert Table 1 - Breakdown of all participants interviewed].

Data selectivity, coding and analysis

Through an inductive research process, a thematic analysis of the qualitative data (interview transcripts and secondary data) was performed using Attride-Stirling's (2001) 'Thematic Networks Analysis' (TNA) approach. As the TNA approach prescribes, we developed a web of basic, organising and global themes arising from our coding, helping to bridge the gap between description, interpretation and key links back to the literature and conceptual ideas. We used NVIVO 10 by uploading all the interview transcripts before fragmenting, coding and interrogating the data, leading to the development of three key themes that make up the following Results and Discussions section. It is important to note that following each interview, each transcript was analysed and emerging themes were iteratively incorporated into our line of questioning. This was particularly important as we started relatively open in our questioning, but then started to focus on emergent themes such as how reconfigured spaces impacted on visitor (im)mobility and consumption, resulting in what we found to be clear examples of business exclusion and the emergent dichotomy between positive local expectation – and - marginalisation. Our core, final themes identified included: i) promises of inclusion vs. realities of exclusion, ii) symbolic and physical transformations of public space, and iii) small businesses and visitor behaviour. All three themes are detailed in the next section and discussed in relation to the problem statement and literature explored prior to the Methodology.

By utilising three different types of triangulation, we attempt to provide a more balanced set of perspectives and evidence base across different data sets. For clarity, methodological triangulations included: i) 'data triangulation' that helped to enhance 'construct validity'; ii) 'stakeholder triangulation' by bringing in a multi-layered stakeholder perspective, and iii) 'researcher triangulation' - as both authors played a part in analysing empirical analysis and developing the coding structures and key themes arising from this research (see Yin, 2013 for a detailed explanation of the different types of triangulation).

Results and discussion

Promises of inclusion vs. realities of exclusion

Small businesses expected to benefit from the occurrence of the Games. A rhetoric of opportunity was reflected by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) council. They claimed, 'we very much hope that all Royal Borough of Greenwich businesses are able to capitalise as much as possible on the opportunities as presented by the Games, and the large number of visitors who will come in to the Royal Borough' (RBG, 2012: 12). Indeed, projected visitor numbers to Greenwich and other Olympic HEZs amplified this positive view. From very early on, prior to securing the right to win the London 2012 Games, the predicted bounties of Olympic induced tourism benefits were stated. The influx of tourists and Olympic-affiliated staff offered a 'massive potential source of business' and research suggested that the UK as a whole would benefit from a '£750m consumer spending boost' (BBC, 2011). Indeed, estimates vary but according to Vlachos (2016) as many as 20,000-25,000 visitors flooded to the Greenwich park venue during the Games.

Local research participants reported on this rhetoric of opportunity, exclaiming that they were promised 'millions of people – spectators, visitors and tourists' (Interviewee #19: SG2); a 'bonanza' (Interviewee #29: SG1); a 'once in a generation opportunity to have local businesses on a world stage' (Interviewee #21: SG2). Individuals claiming 'we [local business community] received multiple letters and meetings to inform us of expected footfall, and how to expect an increase in customer footfall' (Interviewee #39: SG1), and

that ‘we were told [by the council] you couldn’t cope with all these thousands of people that are going to be walking past your shop’ (Interviewee #37: SG1). Others stressed this view was projected via other communicative routes claiming, ‘we had months of newspapers [stating] that it was going to be the best thing since sliced bread, your profits are going to go through the roof’ (Interviewee #26: SG1).

The idea of a strong local, East London legacy was disseminated across a range of official policy reports by the DCMS (including: DCMS, 2008, 2010, and 2012) – with visitor economy benefits at the heart. This established a prevailing rhetoric that this was a Games for the people, and the idea that London would be ‘big enough for all potential visitors’ and ‘open for business’ during the Games (see DCMS, 2007b). Chalip (2004) argues that such ‘immediate leverage’ opportunities are central for commercial businesses to capitalise on visitor economy opportunities. Yet, critical concerns were raised repeatedly around how the Olympics had simply failed to engage with local people and businesses, and their host community spaces. One of the co-authors of the original Olympic bid and Chair of the London Forum for LOCOG noted, ‘...the major mistake, in my view, was that they simply ignored local communities living around them’ (Interviewee #6: SG4). Individual businesses repeatedly amplified their feelings about this scenario, exclaiming that they felt as though they had been ‘sold a short straw’ and ‘humiliated’.

When asked whether the Games should have engaged more closely with local space, one interviewee responded: ‘I don’t believe, actually, they care about engaging local business – that’s not their agenda’ (Interviewee #37: SG1). Other businesses stressed that their interests were superseded by official partners and corporate sponsors and the more globally focused project objectives, claiming: ‘Basically, they came in and just said this is the way it was going to happen’ (Interviewee #34: SG1).

‘...It was a matter of people coming in, posing, and not taking into consideration the local. It was the way it was done, “we will be coming to Greenwich Park you can’t do anything about it”. If there would have been more engagement in the first place, we possibly could have... It could have diffused the situation (...) - from the locals’ point of view we got told [how the project was to be run in the local area] by the local council, and the council got told by LOCOG. Hang on why were they all told, where was the consultation? You’re coming into the area and messing us up, what are we getting out of it?’ (Interviewee #26: SG1).

Territorialising and securing Greenwich’s Last Mile

Findings illustrate the specific ways small businesses emerged excluded by spatial transformations. Notably, the resultant commodification of Central Greenwich, for example, emerged as a major theme. From local businesses to major UK government actors, all SGs illustrated the overt need of Olympic delivery organisations to satisfy sponsors:

‘If you think about how they manage the flows of people onto those spaces - which are corporate spaces aren’t they? - There isn’t some areas where they have pop-up restaurant.... it is much sanitized. Very controlled. To make sure that those key brands are what is on offer and you associate the positive experience and buzz of being on the Olympic Park with Coca-Cola and sponsors’ (Interviewee #8: SG4).

It was repeatedly noted that the IOC, and the Olympics by and large, tend to ‘guard’ private corporate interests. As sponsors were prohibited from accessing Olympic venues, they required alternative spaces to extend their market reach - leading to an extension and corporate spill over into peripheral community and event spaces like HEZs and the Last Mile (also see McGillivray and Frew, 2015). It is of no surprise to find

that local businesses felt left out, superseded by corporate interests that only 'big business' (Interviewee #21: SG2) could access, one simply concluding that 'the Games itself was, yes, I think probably won by the corporates' (Interviewee #36: SG1).

Such view, and empirical findings, reflect Giulianotti et al's (2015) notion of 'corporate kettling', 'whereby physical geography and security measures (...) combine to direct and manoeuvre people into spaces of transnational consumption' (2016: 132). They go on to suggest that, similarly to Greenwich, over 5.5m visitors to the Stratford area (approx. 62% of all spectators - see Armstrong et al, 2017) were forced to transit through the Westfield Shopping Mall and through artificially constructed pathways that (attempted to) resemble a 'high street' – en-route to the Olympic Park. Evidence from the present research reveals a similar case: the creation of what Osborn and Smith (2016) refer to as the Olympic 'brandscape' and the commercialisation of visitor routes that follow to and from Royal Greenwich Park venue, shoehorning visitors to and from official event zones at the expense of including and showcasing the local. Existing, authentic and local high streets ignored in favour of artificially, reconstructed global-corporate high streets. Locals repeatedly claimed that '...everyone got funnelled away from the shops' (Interviewee #42: SG1), and that 'they [event organisers] wanted them [spectators] in as quickly as possible into their events and out as quickly as possible – they didn't want them milling around at all' (Interviewee #34: SG1). This was, in part, due to specific Olympic human and non-human wayfinding. From volunteers pointing the way with pink foam hands, right through to explicit signage and barriers disciplining visitors to move toward official venues and consume in particular ways.

Central Greenwich's Last Mile thus manifested as one of London's many 'tourist bubbles' (Silk and Amis, 2006) – restricting access to other part of the city and community. Transformed spaces facilitating funnels of visitors supported an efficient transit route between entry points to the locality and transportation hubs (see Figure 2). Indeed this reflected Giulianotti et al's (2015) notion of 'instrumental mobility', that effectively reduced visitor 'spillage' outside official routes and pathways (2015: 128).

[Insert Figure 2 – Images of barricaded routes across Central Greenwich].

Businesses described how visitors were physically 'treated like cattle'. After the live events 'they [event visitors] came out and had no opportunity for anything, they were being shoehorned like small school children' (Interviewee #24: SG1). One remarked that, the 'consequences of this walking route and barrier from the station was absolutely deadly for business (...) 50,000 people were managed into the venue and out again without having any ripple on the local area (...) it was devastatingly quiet, all you could see was the shop owners looking' (Interviewee #23: SG1). Locals repeatedly referred to changes to general traffic movement and parking restrictions, arguing that 'regular customers were driven away' (Interviewee #23: SG1). Many public spaces, such as highways, streets, green spaces and local attractions (like the Royal Observatory), were also physically closed down, either in full or in part (see Smith, 2013). For retail and hospitality high street stores who often rely on regular transient footfall, especially within well-established tourism destinations like Central Greenwich, this proved to be a major challenge with respect to trading performance.

Repeatedly, respondents pointed to 'fear' as a major reason for many of the local challenges faced, a narrative amplified by the media. Olympic spaces are regarded as potential targets for terrorist activity. This was particularly so in light of the 7/7 bombings just one day after London won the right to host the 2012 Games, and the growing threat of terrorism in the periods preceding the London Olympics. Securing safe event experiences was the prevailing view held by Greenwich Council, who claimed in a policy report that

the 'safe' and 'successful' hosting of the Games was paramount (Royal Borough of Greenwich, 2012a: 4).

Although appreciated by several stakeholders as a pragmatic and logical necessity, the majority of respondents believed such measures were confusing and illogical in places, being referred to by one respondent as so over the top it was akin to 'crushing a nut with a sledgehammer' (Interviewee #15: SG3). Even a Senior Policy Manager at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) believed some of spatial controls emerged as too intense. Our results highlight the need to understand the negative effects that 'fear' and 'fear tactics' can have on visitor and every-day movement around host city and official HEZ, Last Mile spaces – tactics installed to 'dissuade people from travelling' (Giulianotti et al, 2015: 129) and 'frightened people away' (2015: 130). Additionally, to control the flow of people and contain the 'inevitable' chaos, transport networks were closed down which resulted in restricted access to the heart of Greenwich due to the closure of Docklands Light Railway (DLR) network. Although largely context dependent, primary, secondary and literature evidence all point to the need for event organisers to re-think current models of mobility that can have, and are having, a significant impact on the inclusion and exclusion of particular social groups.

Small businesses and visitor behaviour

Previous research has illustrated how tourism substitution effects and highly circumscribed environments, in the context of MSEs, can cause major disruptions in the everyday trading and commercial environments for small local businesses (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011; Vlachos, 2016). Indeed, (re)engineering urban space to host an MSE requires non-official interests, like existing local small businesses, to 'get out of the way' (Giulianotti et al, 2015: 129) as event organisers attempt to maintain 'fast and steady speeds' (2015: 129) and easy rite of passage of official interests and ticketed spectators and those who have a new, temporary right to access official Olympic leisure spaces like venues and live sites (Duignan et al, 2018). As a result, 'the usual types of tourists were mostly replaced with Olympic visitors who concentrated on the Olympic Park and surrounding venues' (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2012: 5). This observation is echoed by Armstrong et al (2017) who found that 'the vast majority of Olympic Park visitors did not venture anywhere near the wider Stratford area' (2017: 145). This was not just an isolated geographical issue for Stratford. Our Greenwich research participants, too, discussed the challenges related to tourism displacement and aversion markets (Spilling, 1996) that they faced during the Games.

'People who would normally spend their Sunday shopping in Greenwich during the Olympics stayed clear (...) we lost our regular customers because our regular customers would have said "you're crazy going in to Greenwich during the Olympics" (...) people really avoided Greenwich unless they were here for the Games' (Interviewee #33: SG1).

Individual respondents highlighted a range of additional factors that contributed to limiting visitors' access to local businesses. These included: i) the installation of signage warning passers-by, locals, visitors and vehicles to 'avoid the area', ii) overzealous authoritative enforcers, such as traffic wardens, zoning and the newly prohibited parking areas in Central Greenwich, iii) governmental actors, including London Mayor at the time Boris Johnson and local MPs, warning locals, the labour force and tourists alike to avoid 'chaotic' and 'congested' Central London, Host Event Zones and event sites, and iv) intensely regulated and restrictive entry criteria for event venues, including airport-style restrictions on liquids over 100ml and a ban on venue exit and re-entry. A combination of factors left, according to interviewed small businesses, a 'devastating' wake of trade 'decimation' during the 'peak of tourism' in the summer months of 2012 as identified by Interviewee #25 below. *'...no people came because they were told to avoid it on the news and all the millions of visitors were completely barricaded off, so there was literally nobody over the busiest weekend ever. I literally made*

20 *quid*' (Interviewee #25: SG1).

These issues were discussed further by one of the co-authors of the London 2012 bid, who pointed to three main reasons. Firstly, sport event visitors have little desire to engage in cultural activities; secondly, there are issues of 'crowd mentality'; and thirdly, event visitors have a preference for being in central (more touristy) areas. A Senior Business Engagement officer for Greenwich claimed that: 'people changed their behaviour patterns which did have an impact on usual trade (...) to conclude the Games was a very mixed picture' (Interviewee #19: SG2)). Visual metaphors permeated throughout, including comparing these spaces to those in the apocalyptic zombie film '28 Days Later' to describe the sense of desertion. This scenario was encapsulated by one small firm perfectly, exclaiming:

So in the morning thousands of people walking pass the shops, you have this gap of what can only be described as the start of 28 Days Later, you know where there were zombies, nothing on our streets, and then sixty thousand people are zoomed, forced past your shops in the evening – and you can stand there and think “am I the only human being who can see this!” That is how it felt. It felt as though you were the only person on earth and that street was just dead’ (Interviewee #37: SG1)).

Yet, as one of London's most popular tourist hotspots, this emerged as a key lost opportunity for the local (visitor) economy: much to the dismay of existing small businesses and the local authority themselves.

The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) reported a number of major London attractions and tourist hotspots as having '60% fewer visitors' compared to the same time in 2011, down '30%' in the two weeks of the Games, and thus dubbed by the media 'the worst trading period in living memory' (The Guardian, 2012). From taxi drivers and underground staff, right through to traders operating across the city, key stakeholders operating across London's visitor economy highlighted that they had never seen the city so quiet. According to Giulianotti et al's (2015) report almost two-thirds of foreign tourist numbers fell with an estimated 1.5m workers opted to work from home during the period of the Games. Footfall for local businesses and tourist attractions was mentioned as problematic on multiple occasions by small businesses across Greenwich too – by both two Senior Managers at both Greenwich and Newham Councils, and a shadow minister:

‘Tourism and footfall was a key issue around the main event areas, the marshalling and barricading was a problem, and the behaviour of tourists meant they did not stick around. They were tired (...) due to the nature of event tourists they did not stick around, and as they had eaten already and funnelled back to the station they had minimal footfall’ (Interviewee #4: SG4).

Conclusion

This article offers an in-depth exploration of the local idiosyncrasies often left invisible in the study of event impact analysis. Through the perspectives and experiences of one host community, this paper serves to examine the conditions leading to small business exclusion in the melee of Olympic planning.

We analyse the specific ways local civic and leisure spaces became sequestered, territorialised, and securitised, revealing the complex dynamics behind the socio-spatial politics of small business exclusion. Our study highlights the way in which organisational necessities demanded by Olympic planning served to open-up a global-corporate cultural offer by re-engineering visitor flows and closing down the local cultural offer. Through our in-depth empirical analysis, we further illustrate Giulianotti et al's (2015) critical

concepts of 'instrumental mobility' and 'corporate kettling' in practice. We note the particular ways in which MSEs strategically divert visitor flows, circulations and consumption practices to achieve particular instrumental ends. Such ends include granting safe passage across, to and from official event venues, as well as, perhaps more critically, (re)engineering consumption practices toward official sites of corporate consumption to secure the economic benefits of Olympic sponsors at the expense of local, small businesses. Visitors are both mobilised and immobilised in particular ways, yet almost always these socio-spatial reconfigurations result in the expense of permanent (business) residents at the local level.

Indeed, findings illustrate the major dichotomy between the 'rhetoric' of inclusion and local 'realities' of exclusion. The overarching discourses of disappointment and anger identified provide a unique insight into the community's sense of anguish towards the Olympic project. A key aim of this paper has been to amplify the narratives of those who clearly emerge as a vulnerable and 'invisibilised' stakeholder group, subject to deterministic forces of Olympic striation imposed on the town centre businesses, public streets, squares and parks of Central Greenwich. Qualitative evidence illuminates the systematic ways small businesses in and beyond Greenwich fell victim to a project intending to invoke social and spatial control through the (re)configuration or even closure of urban-public civic and leisurely spaces. Opportunities to leverage London's predicted bounties of Olympic tourist flows failed to materialise for small businesses. Ironically, the project excluded the very stakeholders who were initially touted as intended beneficiaries of the Games. Yet, we highlight how such effects were not just isolated to one geographical area. Greenwich, alongside Newham, Stratford, Silvertown, all faced the same effects as a result of the same exclusionary Olympic planning policies and actions.

Such a restrictive mobility regime poses a critical challenge for small businesses highly dependent on leisure consumption, particularly so for businesses already residing within the UNESCO site of Central Greenwich paying premium business rates for a 'guaranteed' return on investment through a so-called captive visitor economy. The creation of a new-temporary Olympic 'touristic bubble' (Silk and Amis, 2006) creates a 'commodity spectacle' that emphasises 'gleaming aesthetics, a sporting city, and a nation collapsed into simple tourist images and a presentation of a particular expression of self within the logics of the global market' (Silk, 2011: 1). By examining special event-led mobilities, we can begin to explain how and why vulnerable communities, particularly small businesses across intensely-territorialised HEZs, often find themselves locked-out: an even more challenging dynamic given the importance of passing trade and local consumption of regular, every day and event crowds to small business performance. Small businesses often rely on the oscillation between strategic (e.g. initiated by events) and ad-hoc (everyday) visitor economy trading (also see Chalip and Leyns, 2002; O'Brien, 2006). Yet, as Vlachos (2016) notes, these business characteristics often leave small businesses vulnerable to external shocks and outside influences, like the occurrence of a mega-event that significantly disrupts business-as-usual activity.

Although MSEs present a series of 'leverageable opportunities' for host communities and small firms (Chalip, 2004) these were missed. The literature and empirical evidence collected here support the critical view that the pre-Games opportunity rhetoric projected by political economic elites proved to be little more than 'legitimation rhetoric' (Foley et al, 2011). In order to support the redistribution of event-related benefits, policy makers, governmental actors at the national and regional levels, host communities and their incumbents must work together to consider how best to integrate local interests into the global MSE project. We argue that strident, legally inscribed IOC rules and regulations should accommodate a 'local' offering; affording a plethora of locally made and/or produced products side-by-side with official offers across HEZs, Last Mile spaces and event venues themselves. Desecuritisng space and opening up an opportunity for visitors to physically flow into the locality may have the potential to foster physical-spatial

connectivity. Extending beyond the London 2012 context, parallels can be drawn against prior MSE delivery (including: Seoul 1988, 2006 World Cup), right through to post-London 2012 contexts like the Rio 2016 Games, offering an opportunity for wider policy and managerial implications. Our recommendations are focused on re-configuring the socio-spatial elements of Olympic organisation and re-direct visitor economy flows toward more open civic and leisure spaces in the hope of redistributing touristic benefits back into host communities intending to benefit.

Policy makers and event managers should facilitate such connectivity to support greater redistribution of opportunity. Balancing visitor consumption across host community spaces may contribute to limiting the economic leakage created by prescribed paths that have historically served to divert spending to global sites of corporate consumption at the expense of the locale, as evidenced throughout this study. From both a policy and management perspective, a more integrated approach to MSE delivery with a view to affording conditions favourable to facilitating more effective local leveraging could involve, for example:

[Insert Table 2 – Practical examples for invoking a more effective, bottom-up approach to MSE management and visitor engagement].

Event delivery implications, as illustrated above, provide policy makers and project actors with practical ideas for supporting specific and appropriate practical ‘bottom up’ leveraging techniques in the context of MSEs. Such actions may help to adequately redistribute economic gains stimulated by the MSE visitor economy and leisure consumption trade through more bottom-up inclusive leveraging strategies that serve to ‘enable positive social change, rectify power imbalances and decrease inequalities’ (Ziakas, 2014: 9). By doing so a stronger local ‘immediate leverage’ may be achieved, supporting the short and longer-term success and sustainability of small business outcomes in the context of Olympic host communities. This is vitally important as a positive local legacy forms one of the core justifications for hosting the event in the first place.

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